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Environmental Stimulation: Developing a Creative Nursery

L Hoch

Buffalo State College

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SECTION I: BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a creative nursery for my unborn child. Environmental stimulation is extremely important for infant development. Not only will the nursery be a place where Joe and I will rear our child, the purpose of this project is to create the tangible benefits it will provide for the baby. The room will have a positive impact on the baby's health, development and growth.

As a result of the many expenses associated with designing a nursery, another purpose of this project is to design a nursery on a budget. I have researched many ways to save money while still designing the room of my dreams.

Lastly, the purpose of this project was to show my growth as a creative individual. I used many CPS skills including divergent and convergent thinking skills, flexibility, originality, I deferred judgment to all of Joe's ideas and opinions and took risks with design, color, lighting and space.

Description

Using color, space, lighting and shapes, I have developed an environment for my baby that will stimulate his senses.

To create this space I researched many aspects of interior design, infant stimulation and development and the health and safety of infants. I learned about the latest nursery furnishings and got many ideas for stimulating objects for babies. I also learned creative ways to add personality and warmth to the space.

As a result of my efforts, I have created a stimulating nursery for where the baby will grow and develop. I wanted an environment where Joe, the baby and I are comfortable and happy. I have created a space with bright colors, comfortable furniture and stimulating objects. The room is a complete with new paint, carpeting and furniture. We also took advantage of the room's natural lighting and outside access.

Rationale for Selection

Providing an appropriate nursery for my infant was very important to me. Babies who are stimulated by their environments reach developmental milestones faster; have better coordination and a more secure self image (Ludington-Hoe & Golant, 1987). My goal was to provide environmental stimulation that will improve my baby's curiosity, attention span and memory. I am extremely passionate and motivated for this project because I wanted to provide my child with the best environment possible.

This experience may also lead to other opportunities to design baby nurseries for people. All parents all have the common need for a nursery. I could help parents create the perfect environment for their children. I have a great deal of passion for design and feel that I am good at it.

Project Creativity

My project was creative in many ways. The nursery was not only creative in an aesthetic way, but working on it has helped me grow as a creative individual. This opportunity has helped me to be open to ideas, to be flexible, to take more risks, to be comfortable with change, and to defer judgment.

This project brought creativity to others in many ways as well. As a result of doing the work ourselves, we were open to the ideas and opinions of our friends and family. I believe that others felt our openness for ideas and were willing to diverge and take risks. We developed a sense of trust and as a result of the project; my infant will have a creative environment where he will be stimulated and happy.

Section II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to complete this project, I did an extensive literature review of books, magazines and journals. I researched and reviewed many types of literature including: interior design, home improvement, painting, infant development, and infant health and safety. As a result of my research, I have not only been successful with completing my project but have expanded my knowledge and skills of many subjects.

This section contains a literature review of eight books. I reviewed choose a variety of books ranging from infant stimulation to interior design. I chose these books as a guide to improve my knowledge and assist me with my project. I also provided a selected bibliography for how to be creative when developing a nursery.

Expanded Abstracts

1: Ambrose, A. (Ed.). (1969). *Stimulation in early infancy*. London: Academic Press.

- ❖ Explore the variety of ways in which stimulation from the environment in the earliest phases of life can affect the development of behavior (Ambrose, 1969).
- The book consists of research papers and discussions from a wide-ranging group.
- The chapters include (research papers discussing):
 - The effects and mechanisms of Early Stimulation.
 - Effects and Biological Functions of Mother-Infant Stimulation.
 - Early Stimulation and Cognitive Development.
- I found the section on mother-infant stimulation to be especially interesting.

2: Conkling, W. (2001). *Smart wiring your baby's brain: What you can do to stimulate your child during the critical first years*. New York: Harper Collins Publishing Inc.

- ❖ Creating a nurturing environment in which your child can grow cognitively.

Chapters include ways to:

- Encourage movement and motor development.
- Stimulate speech and language development.

- Foster a child's emotional health and personal identity.
- Make toy and food choices appropriate to each stage of development.

The book was very informative. I found chapter 7: *Chaos to order: Music, Math, Science and Spatial Relation*, especially interesting.

3: Gibbs, J. (2005). A practical guide to interior design. New York: Abrams Studio.

- ❖ A guide to the basic principals of designing and decorating interior spaces.

Chapters include:

- Historical study and language of design.
- Pre-design work- how to research design.
- Planning and design- principals of design, space planning, drawing and design illustrations.
- Harmonizing the elements- color, decorative scheme, texture, patterns, materials, furniture & accessories.
- Project coordination and management- stages of a project.
- Design education & careers.

- I found the book to be very informative; however I feel it was a bit too advanced for my level and understanding of design.

4: Jones, S. (2001). *Guide to baby products: What you need to know about essential gear-car seats, strollers, carriers, high chairs, cribs, and more. Plus a marketplace guide, recent recalls, and parenting resources*. New York: Consumer Union.

- ❖ Consumer guide to baby products. What you need to know about baby gear, details about hundreds of individual items. Includes Ratings and recent safety recalls and a guide for most commonly prescribed medications and a shopping guide to web sites, catalogs and stores.

- Chapters include
 - Buying and shopping guide
 - Nursery furniture
 - Traveling gear (car seats)
 - Strollers
 - Highchairs/booster seats/swings
 - Diapering and dressing
 - Feeding (bottles/formula/ breast pumps)
 - Playtime gear (toys/walkers/bouncers)
 - Recording (cameras-film & digital/ camcorders)
- The book also includes reference guide for:
 - Products
 - Brands
 - Shopping
 - Ratings
 - Parenting & health resources
 - Checklist/ to-do list for parents
 - Baby Safety

- Pediatric drugs
- Product recalls

- The book is very informative and organized.
- Great guide for new parents; to ensure product choices are functional and safe for infants.

5: Ludington-Hoe, S.; Golant, S. (1985). *How to have a smarter baby: Infant Stimulation-proven ways to enhance your baby's natural development*. New York: Bantam Books.

❖ Guide to having a healthier, happier and smarter baby. Learn techniques to stimulate infant at every stage.

- The books includes:
 - "Infant Stimulation Revolution"- "What we didn't know until now" and "How infant stimulation builds sensational babies".
 - "What you can do to stimulate your baby before birth"- "The world in the womb" and fetal learning, behavior and personality development.
 - "How your baby's brain develops (and how stimulation can affect it)"- Giving baby a head start, Brain development, How diet can influence brain growth and Maximizing infant brain power.

- "The world through your baby's senses"- What does baby see, taste, hear, touch and smell. Baby's sense of movement.
- "Infant Stimulation"- Knowing when-best and worst times to use infant stimulation.
- "How to draw others into your Infant Stimulation Program"- Getting everyone involved and Choosing the appropriate day care for your infant.
- The book also includes a Infant Stimulation timeline which discusses stimulation at every stage of infancy (before and after birth and first six months)
- You'll learn how to: plan a pregnancy diet, design a nursery that will stimulate mental and physical development, make or buy toys to accelerate muscular and eye coordination, customize your Infant Stimulation Program for your infant, talk to baby in ways that will encourage language development and ways to bond family in a relaxed, nurturing environment.

**6: Still, J. (2004). *The smart approach to baby rooms*.
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Creative Homeowner.**

- ❖ The book shows parents how too simply and systematize the design process while keeping it fun. Learn how use all of the aspects of interior design, including how to develop a color scheme and nursery furnishings including walls, floors and windows.
- Chapter 1 "Sweet Dreams" discusses a variety of topics; sleeping arrangements, facts about bedding including mattresses and bumpers. This chapter is important because it discusses the prevention of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- Chapter 2 "Color their World" gives advice on how to creatively use the science of color. You'll find suggestions for choosing a color scheme and coordinating prints and solids as well as painting tips.
- Chapter 3 "Plans and Schemes" discusses planning and designing a space, including creating a floor plan and arranging furniture.
- Chapter 4 "Ideas for Toddler rooms" gives tips for turning a baby room into a toddler room.

- Chapter 5 "Furniture and Storage" discusses the importance of quality furniture.
- Chapter 6 "Wall and Window Treatments" gives ideas for paint, wallpaper, curtains and blinds.
- Chapter 7 "Flooring for the Nursery" looks at all of the sensible flooring options for a nursery.
- Chapter 8 "Accessories and Necessities" gives lists of products and accessories parents may want for the nursery.
- Chapter 9 & 10 "Safe in any Room" & "Meeting special needs" discuss safety information and designing a nursery for a child with special needs.
- The book is very informative and easily understood. I enjoyed the beautiful pictures and found the book very inspiring.

7: Strand, J. (2002). *Baby's rooms: Ideas and projects for nurseries*. San Francisco: Chronicle books.

- ❖ A baby room guide that offers ideas for making a baby's room stylish but functional. Gives tips on how to personalize the nursery with stencils, heirlooms and themes.
- Chapter 1 discusses the different types of cribs (standard, convertible, round, custom) and gives tips

for starting the crib search. This chapter also talks about mattresses and bedding.

- Chapter 2 is dedicated to different types of changing tables.
- Chapter 3 discusses the pros and cons of different types of chairs for the nursery (gliders, rockers, overstuffed chair), and gives examples for foot support.
- Chapter 4 gives tips for cozy extras (twin bed, small table, chest and pillows) that can add to the nursery.
- Chapter 5 discusses lighting and gives pros and cons of each type. I found this section to be extremely helpful.
- Chapters 6-8 discuss walls, windows and floors for the nursery.
- Chapters 9-10 discuss finishing touches and storage. I found a ton of great ideas for homemade projects and creative storage.
- The book also includes pictures of ten real nurseries. The themes range from "flower garden" to "Asian influences".

8: Wilson, J (2006). *Babies' rooms from zero to three*. New York: Ryland Peters and Small.

❖ A guide to planning and decorating rooms for babies and small children as they develop through the early years.

- Chapters include:

- Sleeping nooks
- Unisex nursery
- Rooms for boys and girls
- Shared rooms
- Bathrooms
- Eating Areas
- Play Zones
- Storage
- Checklists
- Questions & Answers

- The book gives many tips to have a baby-friendly house that retains its stylish good looks.
- I learned that babies love mirrors
- I found the book to be very interesting and informative. The book had great pictures and I learned a great deal. The chapter on storage was especially useful. I found a ton of ideas for creative, inexpensive ways to store the multitude of possessions needed for infants.
- I found the checklist and Q&A sections to be very helpful.

- The book gives ideas for homemade touches to personalize the nursery. "Homemade accessories add instant personality to a new baby's bedroom" (Wilson, 2006, p. 126).

Selected Bibliography of how to be creative when developing a nursery

Infant Stimulation:

- Bradley, R.H.; Caldwell, B.M.; Elardo, R. (1979). Home environment and cognitive development in the first two years: A cross-lagged panel analysis. *Developmental Psychology*, 15(3), 246-250.
- Brazelton, T.B. (2000). *The irreducible needs of children: What every child must have to grow, learn and flourish*. Cambridge, Massachusettes: Perseus Publishing.
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- Herschkowitz, N. (2002). *A good start in life: Understanding your child's brain and behavior*. Washington, DC: Dana Press/Joseph Henry Press.
- Jasnoski, M. B. (1992). The physical environment affects quality of life based upon environment sensitivity: Does environment really contribute to healthy, quality life? *Developmental Psychology*, 13(2), 139-142.
- Kopp, C.B. (2003). *Baby Steps: A guide to your child's social, physical, mental and emotional development in the first two years* (2nd Ed.). New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Marotz, L.R. (2001). *Health, safety and nutrition for the young child*. Albany, New York: Delmar.
- Rochat, P. (2001). *The infant's world*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Design:

- Birren, F. (1982). *Light, color and environment: A discussion of the biological and psychological effects of color, with historical data and detailed recommendations for the use of color in the environment*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co.

- Biscotti-Bradley, B. (2006). *Ideas for great baby rooms*. Menlo Park, California: Sunset Publishing.
- Ingham, V.R. (2004). *Color schemes made easy*. Des Moines, Iowa: Meredith Books.
- Jay, R. (2003). *Baby sanctuary: Peace and harmony in the nursery*.
- Mahnke, F. (1996). *Color, environment and human response: An interdisciplinary understanding of color and its use as a beneficial element in the design of the architectural environment*. New York: Wiley.
- Tamir, D. (1984). *Stimulation and intervention in infant development: Theories, evaluation and research programs*. London: Freund Publishing House.

Creativity:

- Vehar, J. R.; Firestien, R. L.; Miller, B. (2001). *Creativity unbound: An introduction to creative process* (3rd. Ed.). Williamsville, NY: Innovation Resources.

SECTION II: PROCESS PLAN

Introduction

The process plan assisted me in completing my project, and has helped me organize the steps I needed to take. Following the plan allowed me to stay on task, work efficiently and meet my goals I set for this project.

My process involved planning and designing a nursery that would provide stimulation for my infant. I attended several "how to" workshops held by Home Depot and participated in interactive design workshops on-line. My process plan focused around design so I spent many hours using interactive design tools. As a result of my efforts, my baby will reap the tangible benefits of the room. The nursery will also have a positive impact on the baby's health, development and growth.

Timeline

February 2007

February 1, I worked on my draft concept paper (3 hours)

February 3-4, I researched baby nurseries, furniture, bedding, and baby gear online (4 hours)

February 5, I researched design, color, space, and lighting online (4 hours)

February 6-9, I worked on me final concept paper and bibliography (2 hours)

February 10, I visited three baby stores and looked at different nurseries (5 hours)

February 11, I contacted Chuck- make plans for room construction (1 hour)

February 11, Joe and I evaluated our budget (2 hours)

February 13, I went to the Buffalo State library to research and check out books (3 hours)

February 14-16, I evaluated research and read books (5 hours)

February 17-18, I worked on Parts 1-3 of project write up (3 hours)

February 24, I attended a "how-to" (interior painting instruction) workshop at Home Depot (2 hours)

February 25-28, I worked on editing parts 1-3 of project write-up (2 hours)

March 2007

March 3-18, I cleared out and cleaned the room (rearranged other rooms in the house to make room for furniture, scraped wall paper border, washed floors, windows and baseboards) (10 hours)

March 8, I used interactive design tools on-line (2 hours)

March 10-11, I continued to evaluate research on color, space and lighting (5 hours)

March 11, I went to 3 stores and picked out a recliner chair for the room (2 hours)

March 15-18, I started shopping around for paint, furniture, bedding and carpeting (6 hours)

March 17-31, I worked on parts 4-5 of project write-up (15 hours)

March 24, I attended "how-to" (window treatments) workshop at Home Depot (2 hours)

March 26, I purchased nursery furniture on-line (1 hour)

March 29, I talked to my doctor about environmental stimulation (1 hour)

March 30, I worked on an on-line design illustration of the room (2 hours)

April 2007

April 1-30, I added knowledge and depth to project (10 hours)

April 1, I purchased nursery bedding on-line (1/2 hour)

April 5, I registered at 3 places for baby shower (includes items needed for nursery) (3 hours)

April 6, I purchased paint and carpeting (1 hour)

April 7-8, I helped with painting the room (ceiling and walls) (6 hours)

April 15, Carpeting is installed (2 hours)

April 19, I shopped and purchased lighting fixtures (2 hours)

April 23-? When furniture arrives, I will help to assemble and arrange pieces in room (hours unknown)

Total Hours: 106 ½ hours

SECTION IV: OUTCOMES

Introduction

Designing and constructing the nursery was the major outcome of this project. The nursery is a stimulating environment I have created for my infant. I used many aspects of research; websites, books, and workshops to improve my knowledge of environmental stimulation, planning and design.

This section contains the information I have researched on infant stimulation, color and theme, space planning, furniture, lighting and health and safety of infants. I have also included many visuals including pictures, drawings and sketches located in the appendixes.

Infant Stimulation

This section contains information on the importance of infant stimulation and nurturing emotional relationships.

Stimulation is extremely important for infant development. Everything that stimulates an infant will have long-term effects on adult behavior (Ambrose, 1969). Stimulation has a significant impact on infants during the first year of life. "Any stimulation provided during the first twelve months has more impact on the brain's growth than at any other time in baby's future life" (Ludington-Hoe & Golant, 1987 p4).

Although environmental stimulation is important, nurturing emotional relationships are the most crucial primary foundation for both intellectual and social growth (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000). "At the most basic level, relationships foster warmth, intimacy, and pleasure; furnish security, physical safety, and protection from illness and injury; and supply basic needs for nutrition and housing (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000 p2). Relationships and emotional interaction teach children communication, thinking and also teach children what behaviors are appropriate and which are not (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000).

Furthermore, infant stimulation can improve a baby's curiosity, attention span, memory and nervous system development. Babies who are stimulated reach developmental milestones faster and have a more secure self image (Anonymous, 2007).

Even though infant stimulation is crucial, it is just as important to remember that each child is unique, and all children learn and develop differently (Kopp, 2003).

Color and Theme

This section contains information on color, developing a color scheme, the emotional impact of color and information on paint and painting techniques. This section also includes information on incorporating a nursery theme and the color, paint and theme choices I made for my nursery.

Color and theme played a significant role in the nursery. "The theme and color choices you make set the room's mood" (Strand, 2002, p.13). Infants are able to perceive color by the time they are two to three months old (Still, 2004). "A primary pastime of young children is paying attention to their sensory world, and color is a key visual element of that world. Color reflects personality, affects the emotions, and stimulates brain development" (Still, 2004, p.39). Exposure to color and other stimuli help develop synapses-vital chemical connections across nerve cells-in the brain (Still, 2004). Exposure to this stimuli and stimulating all of the senses will help a child's development and learning. Prior to choosing a color for the nursery I researched many aspects of color and color schemes. I first chose a main color and then used the color wheel (See Appendix A) to develop a color scheme that works with the main hue. There are many types of color

schemes which includes; monochromatic, analogous, complementary, triadic, split-complementary and tetrad (Still, 2004).

- **Monochromatic**- One color only such as all-blue or all-brown. Monochromatic schemes can be made visually interesting by including varying patterns and textures in the same colorway and by using different intensities of the same color (Still, 2004). The Monochromatic room can be changed by adding accent colors with accessories such as pillows, area rugs, and curtains (Still, 2004).
- **Analogous**- Colors that are adjacent on the color wheel. For example, pink with purple and blue with blue green. "Varying intensity, value texture, and pattern will add interest to analogous color schemes" (Still, 2004 p. 37).
- **Complementary**- Two colors that are opposite or contrast each other on the color wheel, such as blue and orange. Complementary colors blend warmth with coolness and create a more lively feeling (Still, 2004).
- **Triadic**- Three or more colors that are of equal distance apart on the color wheel (Still, 2004). For example, red, yellow and blue.

- **Split-complementary-** Combining one color with those on both sides of the first color's complementary scheme (Still, 2004).
- **Tetrad-** Any two pairs of complementary colors, such the combination of orange and blue with red and green (Still, 2004).

For the nursery, I chose to do a monochromatic color scheme and chose classic taupe as the main hue. I used the bedding (See Appendix B), curtains, area rug and accessories to add accent colors. I chose a warmer, neutral color to evoke a calm and serene environment for my infant. As mentioned above, color can elicit emotional responses in infants. Bright and lively colors put forth the feeling of creative and expressive environment rich with activity, and warmer colors, neutrals and pastels tend to evoke a more calming feeling (Still, 2004). I learned that each color can produce an emotional impact.

- **Red-** Action color- bold, vigorous, energetic. Can raise blood pressure, stimulate appetite, and can increase irritability.
- **Pink-** Promotes a sense of well-being and happiness.
- **Orange-** Warm, friendly, invigorating. Shade is significant and dramatically affects emotional impact.

- **Yellow-** Happy, joyous, uplifting, wholesome and friendly. Promotes clear thinking.
- **Green-** Color of rejuvenation, new growth and fresh promise. Has the ability to sooth and calm.
- **Blue-** Homey and comforting. Can bring down blood pressure and slows breathing rate. In large amounts can be uncomfortably formal.
- **Purple-** Creative, off-beat, adds an element of lighthearted fun and restfulness.
- **Neutrals-** (Beige, Taupe, Brown, White, Gray and Black)
Calming and refreshing, peacemakers that separate brighter shades. Lighter shaded are reasonable and darker shades can be dramatic.

(Ingram, 2004).

Before purchasing paint, I gathered various paint chips from the paint store and looked and various brands of paint. From the Home Depot workshop, I learned about water-based and oil-based paint. I chose a water based paint for the nursery because water-based paint is less sticky, easier to apply, and dries more quickly. I also learned about various paint finishes. Hi-gloss, semi-gloss, satin and flat. Each finish has its own sheen. For my nursery I chose paint with satin finish.

- **Hi-gloss-** maximum durability, stain resistance, scrub-ability and shine.
- **Semi-gloss-** outstanding durability, stain resistance, scrub-ability and shine.
- **Satin-** scrub-able, durable, pearl-like sheen for medium to high traffic areas.
- **Flat-** washable paint that has no shine so it minimizes imperfections.

Paint can be applied in a number of different ways to achieve very different effects. Texture can be added to a wall by using a technique called faux-finish. Sponging, combing, rolling and stenciling are popular painting techniques (McMillan & McMillan, 2004). I added texture with accessories, and painted the nursery traditionally with rollers and brushes.

Choosing the best theme for a nursery depends on many factors including how to incorporate a theme. Many design choices are available. To come to the best decision, think about themes in these broad terms; (Kasabian, 2001).

Fantasy theme- This kind of room takes a person to a new time and place, but is a less practical room. For example, this room may remind a person of a romantic story he/she once read.

Ultramodern theme- This room takes advantage of all that is clean, sleek and contemporary. This room has simple lines and subtle shades of white, off-white and cream.

Antique theme- This avenue offers a lot of possibilities and period themes, from colonial to French country.

Traditional theme- Storybook characters, animals, or children at play are included in a traditional theme.

I choose a traditional theme for my nursery (See Appendix B). After choosing a theme, there are endless ways to incorporate the theme into a nursery. Depending on the length of time the room will be used by the infant, washable wallpaper, decorative painting, window treatments, painted furniture and blankets, pillows and upholstered furniture are ways to incorporate nursery themes (Kasabian, 2001). I incorporated my theme into the nursery with bedding, window treatments, wall hangings and accessories.

Space

This section contains information on space planning including the design principals of scale, proportion, line, balance, harmony and rhythm. This section also includes information on storage and safety as well as the special, storage and safety choices I made for my nursery.

Evaluating space is critical before a person can begin any decorating job. Assessing the space and selecting items for the room can be made easier if a person keeps in mind the design principals of scale, proportion, line, balance, harmony and rhythm (Still, 2004).

Scale and proportion- These two principals work together. Scale is the size of something in relation to the size of everything else. Proportion is the relationship of things to one another based on size (Still, 2004).

Line- "Lines define and shape space, and convey visual messages" (Still, 2004 p.49). For example, the vertical line where two walls meet defines a corner. Lines can also be used to create perception in a room (Still, 2004).

Balance- Balance is the even placement of things in varying sizes and shapes around a room (Still, 2004). Despite the popular misconception, balance does not require symmetry. Balance can be asymmetrical, with pleasing and more often interesting results (Still, 2004).

Harmony- Harmony is reached when everything in a space coordinates with one scheme. This principle pulls a room together (Still, 2004).

Rhythm- Rhythm is repetition of shapes or patterns in a room. Repeated forms help to pull visual attention around the room, keeping the look of the space interesting (Still, 2004).

To create my nursery, I began by measuring the room and drawing a floor plan to scale (See Appendix C). Drawing a floor plan of the room gave me something concrete to work with- and it allowed me to experiment with different options before I spent the time and money to actually make those changes. Finally, a floor plan helped me map out how much material- paint or carpeting, for example- I needed to finish the job (McMillan & McMillan, 2000).

Although a person should always be aware of the aesthetics and holistic aspects of any space being planned, function and practicality are the other obvious priorities (Gibbs, 2005). I had to design and plan the nursery for a particular purpose, and the area needed to cater to the needs and activities of my infant.

Storage was another key element of space planning. "Storage plays a key part in all our lives, and the

designer has to plan this out with precision to ensure that everything required can be accommodated with maximum efficiency and ease of access”(Gibbs, 2005 p.74). In addition to providing space for clothing and toys, I needed storage for the multitude of possessions needed for infants, as well as a storage system that will grow with my infant. I found many fun, cheap and quick ways to store odds and ends. Baskets, crates, bookcases and hanging baskets are a few.

Safety is essential for space planning. Safety in interiors is a planning priority and designers should take particular care where children are concerned (Gibbs, 2005). I took caution when designing the room, making sure smoke detectors and outlet covers were in place and working.

I learned a few tips when deciding how much space I needed in the nursery. According to Joanne Still,

- Maintain 40 inches of space into the room to open drawers without blocking a traffic aisle.
- Reserve 3 feet of space in front of a closet to allow the door to open easily.
- Keep 22 inches of clear space around the crib.
- Leave 6 inches between furniture and baseboard heating and air-conditioning units.

Furniture

Furniture is an important part of the nursery. Most nurseries include a crib, changing table, dresser, and chair. Each of these items can be found in various styles and colors. When shopping for furniture, functionality, quality, and safety are major factors to consider before making a decision and purchase.

This section contains information on different types of cribs, changing tables, and chairs, as well as the furniture choices I made for my nursery.

Cribs

For most people the first thing that comes to mind when they think of a nursery is the crib. Cribs are often the focal point of the nursery and "more than any other piece of furniture, the crib symbolizes babyhood" (Strand, 2002 p. 17). When choosing a crib, the most important things to keep in mind are comfort and safety, and then to make it as inviting and comfortable as possible (Strand, 2002). There are four basic types of cribs; standard cribs, convertible cribs, round cribs and custom cribs. Within each category a person would find varying styles such as sleigh, spindle, canopy, Americana, Victorian, French curve, picket fence and Farmhouse, to name a few (Strand, 2002). Cribs are also available in a wide range of

material, ranging from brass to oak (Strand, 2002). Levy explains each of the cribs as following:

Standard Crib- Serves as a crib only. One will find the largest range of styles in this crib and generally they are least expensive. The disadvantage of this type is "recycling" the crib once the child moves to a bed.

Convertible Crib- A convertible crib converts into another type of furniture. Some convertible cribs become toddler beds and then transform into full-size beds. Others become daybeds and sofas. Some have pieces which can be used as headboards and footboards for full-sized beds. This type of crib is more expensive, but parents will not require another bed for a child.

Round Crib- This type of crib is generally expensive and can be quite opulent. There is so significant benefit to the round shape and because these cribs are often unusual and costly, they are more heavily designed. Not many stores sell these cribs and finding mattresses and bedding to fit may be a challenge.

Custom Crib- This type of crib may mean several things. A person may have had a crib built or may be altering and customizing an existing crib. With this type of crib, a person must be sure to follow particular guidelines so the crib meets US consumer safety standards.

For my nursery, I chose a 4-in-1 convertible crib in a cherry finish (See Appendix D-1). The crib converts from a crib to a toddler bed, then to a full-size bed and has the option to convert to a day bed. Although the crib was more expensive than a standard crib, I like the idea of having the crib grow with my child.

Changing Table

Changing tables are similar to cribs in that there are many options and choices for changing stations. Some parents choose a classic freestanding changing table with shelves; others choose a bureau with changing top. Nevertheless, parents can create a changing table from a wide variety of furniture. Steel kitchen carts, butcher-block desks, and library desks have all been used as changing tables (Strand, 2002).

I chose a cherry wood, free-standing changing table with shelves and plenty of space for storage (See Appendix D-2). Although the changing table may become obsolete as my infant grows, I felt this type of changing station was a safer choice than a dresser or hutch with a changing pad. Kicking babies can easily shake the dresser until items fall and could potentially injury the infant.

Chair

A comfortable chair is a big part of making a nursery a sanctuary (Strand, 2002). In the beginning, the chair will be a place where I feed and rock my baby and eventually will be a place where I may read to my baby. Chairs come in all types of styles. Some types of chairs are gliders, rockers and overstuffed chairs.

Gliders- Many gliders are made of wood or wicker and usually comes with a matching ottoman. A person glides atop a stationary base instead of rocking back and forth. Most gliders are cushioned and comfortable. This type of chair is generally inexpensive (Strand, 2002).

Rockers- This type of chair is primarily made of wood and provides good lower back support. Although this type of chair is less comfortable, they are generally built to last (Strand, 2002).

Overstuffed Chair- This type of chair provides back support and lets arms rest at a comfortable height (Strand, 2002). Although this chair is comfortable and cozy, it may be too bulky for the room.

I chose an upholstered rocker recliner for my nursery (See Appendix D-3). The chair is larger than gliders or traditional rockers, but we will be able to use it in other rooms after it outgrows its usefulness in the nursery.

In addition to a crib, changing table and chair I also purchased a cherry wood 5 chest dresser and a dresser-hutch combination piece (See Appendix D-4). The dresser is large enough to hold adult size clothes and will remain a fixture in my child's room for many years. The dresser-hutch combination piece is a great addition to my room. The hutch can be used a bookshelf and has plenty of drawer and storage space beneath.

Lighting

This section includes information on different types of lighting fixtures that can be used in a baby nursery.

It is important to consider lighting in a baby nursery. For the first few months, the nursery will be used almost exclusively for sleeping and feeding and a nursery that fills with natural light during the day will be great once the child is older, but may not be so great in the beginning months (Biscotti-Bradley, 2006). Functional lighting provides illumination to keep a person out of the dark and indicates where activities take place (McMillan & McMillan, 2004). Decorative lighting creates mood and meaning.

General lighting starts with a ceiling fixture or recessed lights equipped with a dimmer switch (Biscotti-Bradley, 2006). Track lighting and wall sconces are other great choices for nurseries and with these choices there will be no safety concerns about cords or floor lamps when a baby starts to crawl and stand (Biscotti-Bradley, 2006). Lamps and nightlights are also used in baby rooms, but should always be kept out of the reach of children as bulbs may get too hot and exposed cords can be hazards to infants.

I have two wall sconces in my nursery as well as a small lamp equipped with a dimmer and plenty of natural lighting. I made sure that the lamp cord is well hidden and will be out of reach of my infant.

Stimulating Objects

This section includes information on stimulating objects for babies. I also included ways to stimulate infants and included stimulating graphics and musical compositions found in the appendixes.

Beyond the furnishings and safety products, there are environments that are equally important for the healthy growth of infants (Pyroe, 2007). Key among these is the learning and development environments which focuses on play-fostered by toys, stimulating objects and music (Pyroe, 2007).

Stimulating toys feature high-contrast colors, surprise sounds (such as chimes, crinkles, or squeaks), and have multiple levels upon which the toys can be used and enjoyed (Pyroe, 2007). "Recent research has demonstrated that during an infants "curiosity" months, there are two distinct developmental learning environments that need to be nurtured. One is soothing and the other is stimulating" (Pyroe, 2007 p.1). There are certain playthings that foster each environment.

Soothing

- Plush rattles and chime toys
- First baby dolls
- Stuffed animals

- Musical toys that play lullabies
- Sound and light machines that play soothing music

Stimulating

- Sorting & stacking toys
- Baby-safe mirrors
- Books
- Wrist and ankle rattles
- Toys that require interaction
- Small manipulatives such as put-in/ take-out toys

(Pyroe, 2007)

Many objects can be stimulating to infants; even fabrics can make great stimulators. Pass the following textures over a baby's body one at a time, first on the right side, then the left (Ludington-Hoe & Golant, 1985).

- Corduroy- ridges
- Fake fur- piles
- Velvet- softness
- Vinyl- firmness
- Wool-roughness
- Satin- smoothness
- Nylon- slipperiness

A baby responds best to bold, high-contrast colors and graphics especially visual extremes of red, black and

white. In my nursery I hung high-contrast, black and white graphics above the changing table. (See Appendix E-1)

Music is another stimulator for infants. I learned that newborns respond to music and show a particular appreciation for rhythm. "Studies have found that music helps babies gain weight, develop motor coordination, and cry less. In addition, music has been shown to stimulate creativity" (Conkling, 2001, p.120). I also learned that the best compositions for babies are classical pieces. (See Appendix E-2). I have provided many stimulating toys and graphics in my nursery. I also have purchased classical music CD's that I will play in a CD player in the nursery.

Furthermore, according to genius babies.com, the following are additional things you can do to stimulate a baby:

Love- love and affection are real biological needs of infant. Unconditional love and affection create strong self-esteem and increased development of brain circuitry.

Talk to your baby- talk to an infant often and with a wide range of vocabulary and a lot of expression. A parent's voice is his/her favorite sound. The human voice helps babies to learn to distinguish sounds and develop language (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000).

Respond- Parents should respond to a baby without hesitation. This teaches baby that he/she can communicate and gives strong sense of trust and emotional stability.

Touch baby- Massaging an infant may increase growth and help him/her cry less.

Imitation- Encourage baby to mimic a parent's voice and facial expressions.

Let baby experience- expose an infant to different surroundings; go for walks, show him/her sites.

Let baby explore- allow baby to explore different textures and temperatures. Baby's need time to discover things on their own.

Read books- although baby can't follow the story, he/she loves the pictures and sound of a parent's voice.

Play Music- Music stimulates the same neurons in the brain that are later used for mathematics.

(Anonymous, 2007)

SECTION V: Key Learnings

Introduction

I had seven personal learning goals for this project; to be open to ideas, to be flexible, to increase risk-taking, to show my creativity through design and planning, to learn more about infant development, to be respectful and appreciative, and to defer judgment.

In regard to being open to many ideas, I listened and took advice from others. I was very flexible with Joe, allowing him to help in decision making. I took more risk with design and in my color and furniture choices. I showed my creativity through design and planning and took what I learned and expressed it in my own personal way. I learned a great deal about infant development and ways I can stimulate my infant. I was grateful and appreciative to all that helped with the nursery. I deferred judgment and was not critical or negative to Joe's ideas and opinions. I feel I have met my goals and have exceeded my expectations of the nursery.

Content

My project focused on designing a stimulating nursery for my infant. The nursery is not only a beautiful addition to our home, but will be an excellent environment which to rear my child. I used many problem solving skills to

overcome any obstacles I faced. I feel that research was a key element in my success. I learned a great deal about infant stimulation, planning and design. Above all, teamwork was extremely important in my success.

Process

During this project I spent a great deal of time researching different facets relevant to my project. I also attended workshops and took advice from friends and family. I feel that using divergent and convergent thinking skills when designing and planning was very helpful throughout my project. I was open to many ideas and deferred judgment to the ideas and opinions of others. As a result, I took risks I normally would have not taken and was very satisfied with the results. I also took photographs (See Appendix F) which helped to document success.

Conclusion

Overall, I am very pleased and satisfied with my project. Prior to starting my project I set the following criteria: How please am I with the room? How comfortable am I? Does the room bring me joy? Is the room pretty? Am I pleased with the color and furniture choices I've made? How well will the room accommodate the baby? I am very pleased with the room, the room is very cozy and comfortable, I am extremely happy with my decisions of color and furniture

and the room brings me great joy. The room will accommodate and stimulate the baby.

What I learned most about creativity is to trust myself and the process. Creativity is a way of Life; this was proven to me with my success of this project. I realized how much I have grown. I am more confident and positive; I also learned that taking risks and accepting change is crucial for growth.

Next Steps

What I now see myself doing is:

- Using what I have learned to design nurseries for others.
- Utilizing the nursery.
- Providing my infant with the best possible environment including a variety of stimulation.
- Giving advice and tips to other parents on topics such as infant stimulation, design and planning.

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